

# Arkansas Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS) Overview

## History

During the 87<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, the Arkansas State Legislature passed Act 222 of 2009, Arkansas Code Annotated 6-1-400 Et. Seq. that states:

*The purpose of the School Leadership Coordinating Council is to: Aid in the development of model evaluation tools for use in the evaluation of school administrators.*

Act 222 created the School Leadership Coordinating Council that established the formation of the Principal Evaluation Task Force to develop a model Principal Evaluation System for use with principals and assistant principals. The members of the Task Force were representative of many stakeholder groups throughout Arkansas: superintendents, principals, teachers, educational cooperatives, institutions of higher education, school boards, and other education associations. The Task Force officially convened on September 21, 2010. To begin their work, the Task Force established a vision and purpose. The vision of the system is to enhance teaching and learning by expanding the knowledge and skills of educational leaders.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Arkansas Principal Evaluation System is to:

- Provide a cohesive process that includes clear expectations to guide principal preparation, induction, and continued professional development.

- Guide and sustain excellent leadership performance that ensures the improvement of teaching and learning.
- Assist higher education programs in developing the content and requirements of degree programs that prepare prospective principals.
- Provide a process that includes instruments to be used by reflective practitioners to promote their professional growth.

## Structure

The Task Force established a framework for the Principal Evaluation System that is designed to align with The Interstate School Leaders' Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. These standards were adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and are used as the framework for leadership development throughout Arkansas. The Arkansas Principal Evaluation System is designed to incorporate the six major ISSLC standards comprised of thirty-one functions. Additional descriptors have been added to define levels of performance with credit given to *The Leadership and Learning Center* and the work of Dr. Connie Kamm.

## Legal Foundation

In support of the implementation of the Arkansas Principal Evaluation System, the 88<sup>th</sup> General Assembly passed Act 1209 of 2011 and reaffirmed that system support through passage of Act 709 of 2013. Feedback from piloting the Arkansas Principal Evaluation System provided for an expansion to include all building-level and district-level administrators. Known as Arkansas Leadership Excellence and Development System

(LEADS), administrators have opportunities to experience professional learning and growth leading to increased student academic growth.

Additional work by administrators in other school and district positions served to create an evaluation system appropriate for positions other than principal and assistant principal. In addition to the LEADS principal rubric (Form A) and the assistant principal rubric (Form A1) a LEADS Rubric for School/ District administrators (Form A2) outlines the leadership expectations for administrators serving a school or district in additional leadership capacities. Positions of Assistant, Deputy, or Associate Superintendents may be evaluated using this rubric. The LEADS rubric for School/ District leaders is also based on the ISLLC standards and functions.

## **LEADS Levels of Performance**

The following categories represent the various performance levels in the Arkansas LEADS Evaluation System: Exemplary, Proficient, Progressing, and Not Meeting Standards. The purpose of the levels of performance is to consistently represent expertise and effectiveness in the work of building- and district-level leaders. This is especially useful in supporting the work of professional growth through common language and concepts.

### **Exemplary**

Leaders performing at the exemplary level make a contribution to the profession both in and outside their school system. Exemplary performance not only meets the requirements for the proficient level but goes beyond and thus creates a model to which other leaders can aspire. Leaders at the exemplary level assume considerable responsibility for their own

learning. They routinely share their ideas, mentor other leaders, and see their role as agents of system-wide improvement.

## **Proficient**

The *proficient* leader's performance meets the organization's needs. At a *proficient* level, the leader fully meets the expectation of the standard and function. Attaining the proficient level is challenging and may take years. A leader performing at the proficient level clearly understands the concepts underlying the function of each standard and implements those functions well. Proficiency is a rigorous level of achievement. Leaders performing at this level are alert to practices that promote strong teaching and learning and serve as a resource to everyone in their building or district. In addition, they are continuously looking for ways to improve their leadership capabilities.

## **Progressing**

Leaders with a *progressing* rating may reference the rubric to understand what they must do to become proficient. A *progressing* leader is minimally or partially meeting the expectations of the standard and function. Although their current performance may be sporadic and only somewhat successful, they are motivated to take the actions necessary to become proficient. To help this person improve, additional reading, mentoring/coaching, And specific leadership trainings may be required. In addition, visitations to observe and learn from a proficient or exemplary leader may be included in the improvement process.

Leaders early in their careers are often at the progressing level, but improvement is likely to occur as they gain the experience leading to expertise.

### **Not Meeting Standards**

Leaders who do not demonstrate the necessary skills to be rated as *progressing* or *proficient* are designated as *not meeting standards*. When performance is at this level on any of the six (6) standards or on the majority of functions in any of the standards which are part of the LEADS Summative Evaluation Rubric, effective organizations identify and document inadequate performance and prescribe intense intervention. If improvement is not made within a prescribed length of time, a recommendation for non-renewal of employment results.

### **LEADS Leadership Categories**

Levels of leadership performance are divided into three categories: novice/probationary, inquiry and intensive.

**The Novice/Probationary Category** is for individuals who are new to a building or district leadership position. A first-time administrator is placed in the Novice Category as the building-level leader for three (3) years. The Novice Category is for building- or district-level leaders who either hold an administrator's license or are under an approved Administrator Licensure Completion Plan (ALCP). This placement remains until the ALCP is completed. A building- or district-level leader is placed in the Probationary Category, if required under an educational agency's policy for one (1) year if the leader has transitioned to the educational agency from another educational agency with previous leadership experience.

Or has transitioned within a school from one building- or district-level leadership position to another.

**The Inquiry Category** is for leaders who model life-long learning and consistently demonstrate progressing, proficient, and/or exemplary performance on standards and functions in the Arkansas LEADS Evaluation Rubric.

**The Intensive Category** is for leaders who receive a rating of not-meeting-standards on the Summative Evaluation Rubric (Form A, A1, or A2) according to the following guidelines:

- The building- or district-level leader receives an overall rating of not meeting standards on any of the six (6) standards and/or
- The building- or district-level leader receives a rating of not meeting standards and/or not progressing on the majority of functions in any of the standards.

The evaluator may also place the leader in the intensive category if at a time other than an evaluation, the evaluator believes, or has reason to believe, that a building-or district-level leader is having difficulties or problems meeting the expectations of the educational agency or its administration and that the problems could lead to termination or nonrenewal of contract.

When a leader is placed in the intensive category, the superintendent/designee and leader develop a LEADS Intensive Growth Plan (Form C). If progress is made in two (2) consecutive semesters, a leader may remain in the Intensive Category for up to two (2)

additional consecutive semesters; however, if there is limited or no progress in two (2) consecutive semesters, recommendation for non-renewal of employment occurs.

## **Recommendations for LEADS Evaluation Procedures**

The LEADS Evaluation Process may include the following steps:

### **Step1: Orientation**

The superintendent/designee may conduct a group orientation with building- and district-level leaders. The orientation provides information on the forms and processes of the LEADS evaluation system. Providing a complete set of LEADS forms ensures understanding of the basis for leadership evaluations. The superintendent/designee may elect to identify administrator's evaluation categories and schedule initial conferences at this time.

### **Step 2: Collection of Relevant Data**

The building-or district-level leader begins the evaluation process with the collection of relevant data to determine a building or district problem of practice which will be used for the creation or revision of a LEADS Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive). Appropriate data are not limited in format but may be school and/or district data, demographic data, achievement data, or perceptual data. The LEADS Evaluation Rubric (Form A, A1 or A2) may be used by the administrator for Self-Assessment. The leader may choose to gather input from the LEADS Staff Leadership Survey (Form E) for perceptual data. The information from this survey is intended to provide information for the leader's

self-reflection. The reflection process determines which standards and functions are the foci of the LEADS Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive).

The superintendent/designee completes the LEADS Evaluation Rubric (Form A, A1, or A2) for an Initial Assessment prior to the Initial meeting (Step 3).

### **Step 3: Initial Meeting with Superintendent/Designee**

The leader meets with the district superintendent/designee to discuss data collected for the creation or revision of a LEADS Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive). The building- or district-level leader collaborates in good faith with the evaluator to develop his/her growth plan.

### **Step 4: LEADS Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive)**

The building- or district-level leader completes the LEADS Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive) based on the standards and functions determined during Step 3 in the initial meeting with the superintendent/designee. The Leader's Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive) indicates the school's or educational agency's problem of practice and goal(s); the leadership strategies to address the identified problem; results indicators (staff and students); and source of data to be monitored. In addition, the leader determines the action steps needed to implement the strategies. A copy of the leader's completed LEADS Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive) is submitted to the superintendent/designee.



## **Step 5: Formative Assessment Conferences**

During the Formative Assessment Conferences, the building-or district-level leader meets with the superintendent/designee to revisit the LEADS Evaluation Rubric and to discuss the leader's progress on the Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive).

The leader provides data from the results indicators for teachers and students included in the Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive). The superintendent/designee may ask for additional artifacts. The superintendent/designee also provides documentation from school visits, notes from observations, feedback received about the leader, and/or data informing results of the leader's implementation of selected leadership strategies. During this Formative Assessment Conference, the leader and the superintendent/designee may revise the Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive) to make necessary mid-course corrections based on data from the results indicators. The frequency of Formative Assessment Conferences is based upon the building- or district-level leader's individual needs; however, a suggestion for scheduling Formative Conferences is to realize that Novice, Probationary or Intensive Category administrators benefit from more frequent visits than those in the Inquiry Category.

## **Step 6: Summative Evaluation**

The superintendent/designee completes a LEADS Summative Evaluation at the end of each year for leaders who are in the Novice/Probationary or Intensive Categories and minimally once every three years for leaders in the Inquiry Category. The Summative

Evaluation results in a performance rating for the administrator in each required function and standard on the appropriate LEADS Rubric.

The LEADS Evaluation Rubric (Form A, A1, or A2) for Summative Evaluation is placed yearly in the personnel file of leaders in the Novice/Probationary and Intensive Categories.

An overall rating is also given during the Interim Appraisal years. The ratings for these leaders are based on the functions, which are the focus of the leader's Professional Growth Plan (Form B).

Based on the performance levels of the rubric, the evidence of student growth, and progression on the LEADS Professional Growth Plan (Form B or Form C for Intensive), the superintendent/designee makes a recommendation concerning the leader's commendations, areas for improvement, and final rating decisions.